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Most U.S. public elementary and secondary schools faced hiring challenges for the start of the 2024–25 academic year

**October 17, 2024**

*The top two challenges reported were an overall lack of qualified candidates and having too few applicants, federal data show.*

WASHINGTON (October 17, 2024) — New [School Pulse Panel](#) data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the statistical center within the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, show that the majority of the country's public K–12 schools experienced difficulty hiring fully certified teachers heading into the current academic year.

On average, public schools reported having six teaching vacancies and filling 79 percent of those before classes resumed this school year. When asked what, if any, challenges they experienced filling vacant teaching positions for the 2024–25 school year, a majority of public schools reported that there was a lack of qualified candidates (64 percent) and too few candidates (62 percent) applying—the top two challenges selected.

Both elementary and middle schools reported having difficulty filling a special education teaching vacancy with a fully certified teacher , with 74 percent each reporting this. English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education was a commonly reported subject area for which high schools (69 percent) had difficulty filling a teaching vacancy with a fully certified teacher.

"Entering the 2024–25 school year, the data show a decrease in the percentage of public schools reporting difficulty filling one or more vacant teaching positions compared to the previous year, dropping from 79 percent to 74 – but there is still room for improvement," said NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr. "A closer look shows special education positions remain the most difficult to fill. Additionally, the staffing difficulty schools reported was not limited to teachers. They also reported difficulty filling all non-teaching vacancies—particularly transportation staff and tutors—before the current school year began. Those staff are just as important to students' overall education experience."

A majority of public schools—69 percent—reported having difficulty filling one or more vacant non-teaching positions before the start of the school year, which is a decrease from the 80 percent that reported having difficulty before the start of the 2023–24 school year.

The findings released today are part of an experimental data product from the [School Pulse Panel](#), NCES's innovative approach to delivering timely information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on public K–12 schools in the U.S. The data, collected between August 13 and August 27, came from 1,392 participating public K–12 schools from every state and the District of Columbia.

Experimental data products are innovative statistical tools created using new data sources or methodologies. Experimental data may not meet all of NCES's quality standards but are of sufficient benefit to data users in the absence of other relevant products to justify release. NCES clearly identifies experimental data products upon their release.

All data released today can be found on the [School Pulse Panel dashboard](#).

**Key Findings:****Staffing for the 2024–25 School Year**

- On average, public schools reported having six teaching vacancies and filling 79 percent of those vacancies with fully certified teachers before the start of the 2024–25 school year.
  - Compared to the national estimate (filling 79 percent of vacancies with fully certified teachers), public schools with the following characteristics reported filling a higher percentage of vacancies with fully certified teachers:

- with a student body made up of less than 25 percent students of color (83 percent).
- Compared to the national estimate (filling 79 percent of vacancies with fully certified teachers), public schools with the following characteristics reported filling a lower percentage of vacancies with fully certified teachers:
  - with a student body made up of more than 75 percent students of color (72 percent); and
  - in high-poverty neighborhoods (72 percent).
- The table below displays the percentages of public school teaching vacancies filled with fully certified teachers before the start of the 2024–25 school year by position.

Subject area	Percentage of vacancies filled
Social studies	89
General elementary	88
English or language arts	85
Physical education or health	84
Mathematics	83
Biology or life sciences	81
Music or arts	81
Computer science	78
Career or technical education	77
Physical sciences	77
Special education	77
ESL or bilingual education	75
Foreign languages	71
Other teaching positions not listed	66

- Seventy-four percent of public schools reported they had difficulty filling one or more vacant teaching positions with a fully certified teacher before the start of the school year, a decrease from 79 percent that reported having difficulty at the beginning of the 2023–24 school year.
- The top two challenges public schools reported experiencing in trying to fill teaching vacancies with a fully certified teacher entering the 2024–25 school year were:
  - an overall lack of qualified candidates (64 percent); and
  - too few candidates applying (62 percent), a decrease from 70 percent in 2023–24.
- Among public schools having one or more teaching vacancies to fill in specific subject areas, some commonly reported subject areas with teaching positions reported as difficult to fill for the 2024–25 academic year, by school level, were:
  - elementary: special education (74 percent of public schools), ESL or bilingual education (59 percent), and foreign languages (59 percent);
  - middle/combined: special education (74 percent of public schools), physical sciences (71 percent), and foreign languages (69 percent); and
  - high/secondary: ESL or bilingual education (69 percent of public schools), physical sciences (66 percent), and special education (66 percent).
- On average, public schools reported having five non-teaching vacancies and filling 73 percent of such positions before the start of the 2024–25 school year. The table below displays the percentages of public school non-teaching vacancies filled before the start of the 2024–25 school year by position.

Non-teaching staff position	Percentage of vacancies filled
Administrative staff	92
Instructional coach	88
Academic counselor	84
Academic interventionist	83
Technology specialist	83
Medical professional	82

Non-teaching staff position	Percentage of vacancies filled
Nutrition staff	78
Mental health professional	77
Classroom aide	74
Custodial staff	74
Tutor	65
Other non-teaching staff	64
Transportation staff	60

- Sixty-nine percent of public schools reported they had difficulty filling one or more vacant non-teaching positions before the start of the school year, a decrease from the 80 percent that reported having difficulty at the beginning of the 2023–24 school year.
- Among public schools, the top non-teaching position reported as very difficult to fill before the start of the 2024–25 academic year was transportation staff (90 percent of public schools).

### Community Collaboration

The latest School Pulse Panel also included information about public schools that reported using a “community school” or “wraparound services” model.

- Forty-eight percent of public schools reported using a community school or wraparound services model in which a school partners with other government agencies and/or local nonprofits to support and engage with the local community (e.g., providing mental and physical health care, nutrition, housing assistance), a decrease from the 60 percent that used one of these models during the 2023–24 school year.
- Eighty-nine percent of public schools reported that services are available to their community through an existing partnership to provide community services, a decrease from the 94 percent that reported services were available during the 2023–24 school year.
- Sixty-one percent of public schools reported that mental health care services are available to the community through their school’s existing partnerships, a decrease from the 2023–24 school year (66 percent).
- Forty-six percent of public schools reported that nutrition/food assistance services are available to the community through their school’s existing partnerships, a decrease from the 2023–24 school year (55 percent).

### Technical Note

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and non-sampling error. All comparisons in this statistical press release have been tested and found to be statistically significant unless otherwise noted. NCES statistical tests are generally conducted at a 95 percent level of confidence.

**Community school or wraparound services model:** A community school or wraparound services model is when a school partners with other government agencies and/or local nonprofits to support and engage with the local community (e.g., providing mental and physical health care, nutrition, housing assistance).

Additional details regarding the methodology, including the survey questionnaire, can be found on the [School Pulse Panel methodology web page](#).

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*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a principal agency of the U.S. Federal Statistical System, is the statistical center of the U.S. Department of Education and the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition and progress of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally.*

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*on which to ground education practice and policy and to share this information in formats that are useful and accessible to educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public.*

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